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**An Bille um Theanga Shoiléir, 2019**  
**Plain Language Bill 2019**

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*Mar a tionscnaíodh*

*As initiated*

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**AN BILLE UM THEANGA SHOILÉIR, 2019**  
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ACT REFERRED TO

Official Languages Act 2003 (No. 32)



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AN BILLE UM THEANGA SHOILÉIR, 2019  
PLAIN LANGUAGE BILL 2019

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# Bill

*entitled*

An Act to ensure that all information for the public from government and State bodies is written and presented in plain language. 5

**Be it enacted by the Oireachtas as follows:**

## PART 1

### PRELIMINARY AND GENERAL

#### Short title, citation and commencement

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1. (1) This Act may be cited as the Plain Language Act 2019.
- (2) This Act shall come into operation one month after the date of its passing.

#### Interpretation

2. For the purpose of this Act—

“information” means any information communicated to the public by Government Departments or State bodies in written form by means of letters, emails, mail shots, leaflets, reports, media advertisements or websites; 15

“plain language” means the writing and presentation of information in the English or Irish language, including any obligations under the provisions of the Official Languages Act 2003, so that the reader can reasonably be expected to be able to understand and act on it after a single reading. 20

## PART 2

### PLAIN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

#### Preparing to implement plain language requirements

3. (1) Within nine months of the enactment of this Act the head of each government department and State body shall— 25

- (a) appoint a senior official to see that it is implemented,
  - (b) inform and explain what employees must understand and do to meet the requirements under this Act,
  - (c) train employees to write and present information in plain language (English or Irish), 5
  - (d) establish a process to oversee how each department and state body complies with the requirements,
  - (e) create and maintain information on language on each department's and State body's website and for the central government website [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie), and
  - (f) set up at least one point-of-contact in each department and State body to deal with the public's feedback on how well the department is using plain language. 10
- (2) The websites referred to in *subsection (1)(e)* shall—
- (a) inform the public of how well departments and State bodies are complying with the requirements of this Act by publishing an Annual Compliance Report and Action Plan referred to in *section 7*, and 15
  - (b) provide a way to receive and respond to public input on—
    - (i) how well they are implementing the Act, and
    - (ii) compliance reports required under *section 7*.

#### **Using plain language requirements in new or updated documents**

4. Within one year of the enactment of this Act every government department and State body must use plain writing in every new and updated document it produces for the public. This means every department and State body in Ireland must make sure that every old document it revises is only released after it has been written or revised in plain language. 20

#### **Guidelines**

5. (1) Within six months of the enactment of this Act the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach shall— 25
- (a) send out clear guidelines on how to implement the Act,
  - (b) develop and issue standards and guidelines on implementing the requirements of this section and may make one department a lead department (they may also use interdepartmental working groups to help to develop and issue the guidance), and 30
  - (c) develop and publish plain language standards and guidelines which should have the following:
    - (i) principles;
    - (ii) guidelines; 35
    - (iii) techniques;
    - (iv) examples; and

- (v) success criteria.
- (2) With immediate effect all departments and State bodies will apply the writing guidelines as set out in—
  - (a) the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform’s Plain English Style Guide, and
  - (b) the [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) content guide.

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## PART 3

### REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

#### **Initial compliance report**

- 6. Within nine months of the enactment of this Act the head of each government department and State body must publish a detailed report showing how it is implementing the provisions of the Act. This report shall be published on their website. 10

#### **Annual compliance report from each department and State body**

- 7. Within 18 months of the enactment of this Act, and at least once a year after that, the head of each department and State body shall publish a report on the plain language section of its website which will detail the progress it has made. They shall also include an Action Plan for working towards full implementation of the provisions of this Act and embed plain language in the culture of their department or State body. 15

#### **Annual compliance report from the Office of the Attorney General**

- 8. Within 18 months of the enactment of this Act, and as part of the Annual Report of the Office of the Attorney General, that office will publish a composite report on how each government department and State body are doing in terms of implementing the *Plain Language Act 2019*. 20

# BILLE

*(mar a tionscnaíodh)*

*dá ngairtear*

Acht dá chinntiú go ndéanfar an fhaisnéis go léir le haghaidh an phobail arna heisiúint ag comhlachtaí rialtais agus comhlachtaí Stáit a scríobh agus a chur i láthair i dteanga shoiléir.

*An Teachta Nollaig Mac Concharraige a thug  
isteach,*

*31 Eanáir, 2019*

# BILL

*(as initiated)*

*entitled*

An Act to ensure that all information for the public from government and State bodies is written and presented in plain language.

*Introduced by Deputy Noel Rock,*

*31st January, 2019*

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH  
ARNA FHOILSIÚ AG OIFIG AN tSOLÁTHAIR  
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